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THE
MORAL LAW.

CONSIDERED AS

A RULE OF LIFE.

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MORAL LAW

CONSIDERED AS
A RULE OF LIFE

TO
BELIEVERS,

DESIGNED AS AN ANTIDOTE TO
ANTINOMIANISM,

BY SAMUEL BURDER.

*Ficta omnia celeriter, tanquam flosculi, decidunt, nec
simulatum potest quidquam esse diuturnum.* TULL.

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1795.



P R E F A C E.

MOST things which are intrinsically excellent have their counterfeits. The graces of the Holy Spirit in a Christian are frequently imitated in the acquisitions of the hypocrite. Even divine revelation has not escaped this general evil, but the word of truth has been opposed in its progress by subtle and specious errors. It has therefore been found necessary to stand forth in defence of the truth, and to strip it of those false glosses which have been put upon it, that its native lustre may be displayed before the eyes of men, in order that the truth may effectually operate on their minds, and answer the great purposes of its manifestation.

In whatever form error may appear, there are general characters which will apply to it, and by which it may easily be distinguished from truth. If any sentiment is contended for, which
grants

grants indulgence to the flesh—which favors carnal reasoning or pride—which constrains the Scriptures to support it by force or fraud, and which after all, is irreconcilable with the general system of revealed truth: I should immediately suspect it was erroneous; especially if such as declared themselves its advocates, were impatient of any restraint or contradiction—if they endeavoured to hide its deformity—and to keep out of sight its consequences, that they may prevail with men to adopt and foster it. All error is dangerous; but to exhibit it by studied arts, to make it grateful to the unsuspecting,

Is like the poisoning of a dart,
Too apt before to kill.

COWLEY.

I mean to apply these remarks to the subject of the following pages, in which sentiments, and not characters, are canvassed and animadverted upon. As much as the nature of the plan would admit, I have been satisfied with stating and confirming the truth, conceiving that method preferable to a controversial examination of erroneous assertions. One or two exceptions

exceptions only to this declaration will be found to occur in the work, and even these are given without any reference to their author.

Infidelity, with hasty strides, advances upon us, and receives no small encouragement from the prevalence of error. It becomes, therefore, the duty of such as know the truth, to contribute their part to prevent the approaching danger. While such persons discriminate between errors, as to the degrees of guilt attached to each, they must oppose the whole, lest they should receive a wound on the unguarded side. In this department of service I have taken my station, and shall endeavor to repel the force of that thrust, which the dagger of licentiousness aims at the cause of purity and holiness. My labours will be most amply rewarded, should this attempt in the least measure contribute to exalt the Redeemer of sinners; and rescue any part of truth from those reproaches which some men have cast upon it, because it has been misrepresented in theory, and abused in practice by some of its professors. There are glorious days of gospel knowledge, liberty, and purity approaching:
nor

nor is it any longer a question, whether God is preparing the way for a general spread of divine light; recent events and present appearances, compared with prophecy, inspire and animate with a hope, the waiting church of God, that he is about to accomplish the great purposes of his will, respecting his chosen people: and that shortly ~~we~~ shall possess the real interpretation of some mysterious dispensations of Providence, in beholding the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.

In the execution of this work, I have aimed at simplicity of method, and perspicuity of stile, many important considerations are here presented to the reader in a very concise manner. Prolixity is disgusting. In this respect I hope there is no just cause of offence. The extensive nature of the subject would have led to a more copious discussion of some particular points, had I not regarded the maxim of a heathen poet.

*Est brevitæ opus, ut currat sententia, neu se
Impediat verbis, lassas onerantibus aures.*

Hor.

INTRODUCTION;

THOSE who are conversant with the History of the Christian Church must have observed, the prevalence of different errors, at particular times. At one period, the Church has been distracted with controversies on fundamental principles: and, at another, perplexed with contentions about the most trivial circumstances. It has seldom happened, that the attention of the advocates of truth, has been excited at one time to many objects of this nature; tho' several in their turn have called for their
B exertions,

exertions, in defence of the Gospel. When
 one tenet has been in fashion, and had its
 day, it has gradually declined, and gone
 into obscurity, to make way for the exhi-
 bition of another. Perhaps our present
 circumstances are peculiar: there seems to
 have been a *resurrection* of many false doc-
 trines, which have long lain in oblivion,
 as well as the *invention* and propagation of
 several novel ones: and amongst others,
 that sentiment which opposes the Law of
 God, as a rule of life, accompanied, with
 the specious declaration, that it is a truth
now first brought to light. I shall, how-
 ever, lay before my readers, some HISTO-
 RICAL *evidence*, to prove, that the senti-
 ment was broached *long ago*—that it was
then considered and opposed, as a devia-
 tion from the truth—and that consequently,
 it is nothing more than *an old error revived*.

WHEN

WHEN the providence of God raised up *Martin Luther*, about the year 1500, at *Isleben*, in *Saxony*, there were many who opposed the doctrines which he endeavoured to establish. *Luther's* great aim was to deliver men from the Papal yoke, and from the influence of those false teachers, who confounded the Law and the Gospel together. To effect this great design, he endeavoured to impress the minds of the people with a sense of the necessity of the merits of Christ to save them from eternal death. While he was engaged in enforcing this scriptural doctrine, he was opposed by one *John Agricola*, a native of *Isleben*, and a person of considerable eminence in the Church. This was in the year 1538. Some of the pretended advocates of truth, never act in a fair and candid manner; they endeavour to shelter themselves, and their doctrine,

doctrine, under the reputation and influence of others. This was the case in the present instance. *Agricola* declaimed against the Law, maintaining, that it was neither fit to be a rule of conduct, or a means of instruction: and, that the Gospel was to stand alone in the Churches. This he had the effrontery to impute to *Luther*, as the consequence of his principles. Hence his followers were denominated *Antinomians* *, from their professed antipathy to the Law. But *Luther*, ever watchful to prevent encroachments, soon observed

It may probably occur to some persons, that we might commence the history of this error at a much earlier period than the days of *Agricola*. It cannot indeed be doubted, but that it existed in the Apostolic age; since it is evident, that *Paul* opposes it in his epistles: And there is sufficient reason to conclude, that it has ever since prevailed in a less or greater degree. But, as Ecclesiastical historians say very little of it till this period, and as most errors are denominated from persons of eminence, who patronized them about the time of the Reformation, it seems most proper to begin the history with these transactions.

what

what was going on. He opposed the error in its infancy; and, by the energy of his arguments, constrained *Agricola* to renounce his tenets and throw aside his system. We ought not to wonder if a disregard to the divine precepts, is accompanied with insincerity, as it respects professions to men. Scarcely had *Luther* received his discharge from this state of warfare, by the resolute hand of death, than *Agricola* revived his error*, and propagating it with redoubled vigour, gained many proselytes to his pernicious doctrine†.

ERRORS seldom are confined to particular places; they spread with a contaminat-

* *Luther* seems to have been fearful of this circumstance, when he says, "I admonish all such as fear God, diligently to learn the proper use of the Law, which I fear, after our time, will be trodden under foot, and utterly abolished, by the enemies of the Truth."—*Commentary on the Galatians*, p. 153.

† *Mosheim's Eccles. Hist.* Vol. iv. p. 320. last edit.

ing influence. This false doctrine visited *England*, soon after the *Reformation* dawned with its salutary beams: when the minds of the people were considerably agitated and confused*. By many it was embraced and defended: and by others detested and opposed. But having once erected a standard, and made a successful rally, many resorted to it, and continue to stand by it.

IN the reign of *Charles the Ist.* the assembly of Divines appointed a committee to examine the writings of such persons as were suspected of *Antinomianism*. This arose from their solicitude, to guard the people against the errors which then abounded. In the year 1643, the committee having perused the books to which their at-

* MOSHEIM'S *Eccles. Hist.* Vol. v. p. 411.

tention had been directed, and having made extracts of the most dangerous positions, made their report to the assembly, who not only condemned, but also confuted them in their public sermons and writings*.

DR. CRISP has frequently been considered as an *Antinomian*. Prejudice may with many perpetuate, or at least prolong this imputation; but a fair investigation of the matter will, I think, nearly clear him from any such charge. He was a most zealous advocate for the doctrine of Free Grace; and perhaps sometimes expressed himself in an unguarded manner: but I am inclined to think, without intending so much as his words seem to convey, many of which, no doubt, would have been al-

* NEAL'S *Hist. of the Puritans*, Vol. iii. p. 68.

tered, had he revised and published his sermons, which he was prevented from doing by death. Let his sentiments, however, be what they may on other points, he was *an Advocate for the Law, as a rule of life*. So that, in this respect, he was not an *Antinomian*. This will appear beyond all dispute, from the following passages, selected from his sermons: “ The rules and
 “ precepts of the Law are very subservient
 “ unto Christ, as they adorn the life with
 “ a conversation befitting a companion
 “ of Christ: who calls us not to uncleanness,
 “ but to holiness. Now had we not
 “ directions from the Law, men would live
 “ as they list: Christians would be rather
 “ monsters than men*.” Let that mouth
 “ be for ever stopped, that shall be opened

* CRISP'S *Serm.* Vol. II. p. 628.

“ to blame the Law, that is holy, just, and
 “ good ; or shall be a means to discourage
 “ people from walking in the command-
 “ ments of God blameless *.” I shall only
 further remark, that severe, and sometimes
 groundless animadversions, were made
 on these sermons, by Dr. *Daniel Williams*,
 who has, in some instances, made false
 quotations, by doing which, any book what-
 ever might be exposed to censure.

If indeed human testimony gives weight
 to any doctrine, we might produce a cloud
 of witnesses to confirm the sentiment, that
 the Law is a rule of life. It has the assent
 of the most learned, and most holy men,
 who have enlightened the world by their
 writings, and though many of them widely

* CRISP'S *Serm.* Vol. I. p. 232.

differed in other respects, yet in this they were united, and gave their voice in its favour. We are happy to find such a general concurrence on this point ; but after all, we rest the decision on the word of God, the only standard of divine truth.

It has been frequently asserted, that christian liberty cannot exist while the Law is obligatory upon believers. If so, I humbly propose to the abettors of such a declaration, to reconcile, with the wisdom and love of Christ, that state of spiritual bondage, in which he has permitted his people to remain, for near *eighteen centuries*, through their ignorance of the Gospel, which he might have removed, and so have set them at liberty. But I think it will appear, that Christ has actually put and preserved his people in the possession of
their

their promised liberty, and that all pretensions to the contrary, are groundless and absurd.

WHEN men are influenced by the dictates of pride and interest, objects unworthy an enlightened mind will engage their attention : and if their principles are corrupt, their aim will be improper. Hence it has frequently been found, that notions originating in the bewildered imagination of men, have terminated in their disgrace and ruin : though probably not without gratifying their insatiable thirst for human applause. These observations will apply to *Antinomianism*. It breathes nothing of that humility which so admirably adorns every Christian doctrine. Nor is it accompanied with that simplicity so conspicuous in Gospel truth. It does not promote the glory

of God, but the exaltation of the creature. Its incoherent language betrays the illegitimacy of its birth. And after it has fed the fire of human pride, consumes in its own flames the unhappy victims of its power. Such is the nature of this error, if divested of its gaudy trappings.

From these considerations it is plain, that the error we mean to oppose, has no claim to be considered, as a very recent discovery; but that it is only once more brought forth to the light, from that native darkness, in which it is most proper it should for ever dwell.

CHAP. I.

EXPLICATION.

WHEN the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for, as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him *. Such is the language used by many professing Israelites, concerning the Jewish law-giver, in the present day; and probably the same impatience of restraint, and heart idolatry, may dictate it. An aversion to every part of the *Mosaic Oeconomy*, is with many the principal criterion of a true Christian. And a man, who professes any attachment to the moral law, and walks consistently with that profession, is calumniated as a legalist, and discarded as a pharisee.

• Exod. xxxii. 1.

This

This intolerant conduct is *commonly* the fruit of *Antinomianism*; by which I mean, the rejection of the moral law, as a rule of life to believers, which, properly speaking, constitutes only *one* branch of that error. A pretended concern for the purity of the truth, the freeness of grace, and the glory of Christ, generally accompanies this opposition to the law. But this conduct is unjustifiable. Those whom they thus intend to oppose, do not wish to obscure the Gospel, to depreciate free grace, or conceal the glory of the Redeemer, though this is constantly insinuated; for when they point to the Lamb of God, they can say of him, with regard to their salvation.

“ Him first, Him last, Him midst, and without end.”

And *equally* with their opponents, abhor the thought of bringing good works to plead before God, in point of justification and acceptance. So that there is no other reason for the use of such assuming language than *ignorance, pride, and bigotry*.

Such a spirit has been productive of innumerable evils. The peace of many Christian churches has been destroyed; and the ministry of the Gospel brought into disrepute with profane and irreligious persons. If any who sustain that sacred character, declare in the face of the world, that all such as do not exactly coincide with their own views, are hypocrites and deceivers; many will be ready to credit the assertion and believe it true of the whole. And whilst a spirit of scepticism prevails, it will the more readily be received

ceived. To common sense however it appears probable, that *he* who thus calumniates his brethren by wholesale, is *himself the deceiver*; and thus his charges rebound, with accumulated force upon his own head.

“ There are too many, who would have the ministry of the Gospel restrained to the privileges of believers; and when the fruits of faith, and the temper of mind, which should be manifested in those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, are inculcated, think they sufficiently evade all that is said, by calling it *legal preaching*.*” Whenever doctrines are practically treated, they become objects of dislike: and when duties are enforced, it stirs up the secret disaffection of the mind to obedience. Is not this literally the fruit of that *Free-thinking*, which takes its rise in *Free-living*? There are but few who resort to such sentiments, but those who do it in *self-defence*. They first depart from God in their lives, and then expunge his law from their creed. This is to be sure the most effectual way to be consistent, and to silence conscience; but it is certainly a taking away from the word of life †.

To ascertain the cause, and account for the prevalence of *Antinomianism*, is not very difficult. “ It is a sort of surfeit, which in all churches has been found to succeed, a plenty of evangelical preaching. When the merit of good works is exploded—when free justification is preached—when the unworthy are encouraged to hope for a free pardon

* OMICRON. Letter 6. † Rev. xxii. 19.

“ of all their sins, and so on, it is generally seen, that
 “ some zealous preachers overshoot the mark, and ge-
 “ nerate doctrinal *Antinomianism* *.” But there is a
 great avidity in many hearers to receive, as in
 preachers to diffuse such sentiments. The Gospel, it
 is true, proclaims *liberty to the captive*, but it proposes
 no liberation from the authority of God; no dissolution
 of sacred obligations. It has a contrary design
 and operates as an additional cord, to bind us the
 faster to God.

As to its prevalence, it may be observed, that frequently a spirit of dissatisfaction with old established doctrines; together with that encouragement it gives to negligence and sensuality, renders it not a little grateful to many. To say no man can be a real christian, and hold such sentiments, is unwarrantable; but to declare, that the *generality* of such as do, are not remarkable for *humility, spiritual mindedness, or consistency*, is nothing but the truth. In proportion as men depart from the strictness of gospel doctrine and discipline, will such views of religion be acceptable. Many wish Heaven in the easiest way they can have it. This method exactly meets with their views: they may be justified freely, and have no law to curb them: So that holiness is to come freely also, without any care or pursuit of their own. This, however, appears to many serious persons, a great deviation from the *good old way to glory*.

* ROBINSON'S *Notes upon Claude's Essay*, Vol. ii. p. 260.

That I may not be misunderstood, in opposing such corrupt sentiments, some particulars must be attended to. Let it then be observed, that,

I. We do not wish to *destroy* christian liberty. We have too high a sense of its excellency and importance to make such an attempt. Such as have tasted the sweetness of gospel freedom, wish no more to go back into Egyptian bondage. We can never be sufficiently thankful to God, for his gracious interposition in the season of our adversity; for breaking the fetters of our sin and guilt, and bringing our souls out of prison. But it is a strange way of expressing our gratitude, immediately to break the tables of the law, that it may not be binding upon us in future. If a felon, expecting the approach of the day of execution, receives a free pardon, and an instant discharge, is he not as much as ever, obligated to obey the Law, for the violation of which, he had so lately been under the sentence of death? His pardon sets him free from the *curse*, but not from the *power* of the law; an attempt to subvert which, would be an act of treason. Something like this is the case of justified persons. God makes them free from the *sentence* of death, but not from the *law* which pronounced the sentence, which still remains holy. To make it void, is an act far beyond the extent of human power; and, if the law is the rule of invariable rectitude, God himself must change, before that can be altered. So that it is impossible for us to destroy Christian liberty, in vindicating it from the rude and unhallowed assaults of men.

D

II. We

II. We do not wish to *infringe* upon Christian liberty. We rejoice that it is so extensive as the word of God declares it to be. As including in it, an exemption from the curse of the law—from the tyranny of sin and Satan—from the fear and evil of death—and from any real injury which we can sustain from the world. We believe and rejoice in the prospect of its extension; *for the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God**. Happy will it be for the saints, when sin shall exist no more to perplex and distress them: and, the great accuser of the brethren, shall be cast into the bottomless pit. But these things are future. What liberty we have attained to, results from the victory of Christ, as the Captain of our Salvation. Let us preserve it inviolate, as the precious pledge of future acquisitions. So far from contracting, we shall extend it, by following the Lord fully †, which we cannot do if we reject the law.

III. We do not wish to *corrupt* the liberty of the gospel. In fact this is impossible. The Christian's charter of rights, and constitution of privileges is the Bible. An appeal to that, ought to be decisive. If we corrupt that, the imposition will be detected, and the fallacy discovered, by the teachings of the Divine Spirit, in the minds of others. The experience of the Christian is the counterpart of the written word; it is the *engrafting* of it into the heart †. And, as it is the work of the Spirit, to lead men into the freedom of

* Rom. viii. 21.

† Numbers xiv. 24.

‡ James i. 21.

the

the Gospel, any attempt to corrupt and mix the liberty it proposes, will be ineffectual.

The work of redemption fully implies the perfection, certainty, and perpetuity of Christian liberty; a ransom was paid in the sacrifice of Christ, for this very purpose; and, as the great object proposed was really accomplished; so the blessing once conveyed to us is irrevocable. The Holy Spirit is given as a seal, to confirm the divine transaction: and, as a pledge to assure us of the fulfilment of those promises, which relate to future happiness. Thus God at once promotes his own glory, and secures the prosperity of his people. And, while he discovers the infinite superiority of spiritual freedom, excites ardent desires in the hearts of his children, for a plenary enjoyment of it; and, in due time amply gratifies their most extensive wishes.

We do not suppose then, that if the law is established as a rule of life, that Christian liberty is either *destroyed, contracted, or corrupted*. If old testament saints, when under the law as a covenant, as well as a rule, rejoiced in the promised Messiah, they could not be strangers to this liberty. With great propriety then may we be said *to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free*, even when we acknowledge ourselves to be under the law, as our guide and directory.

CHAP. II.

DISTINCTIONS AND CAUTIONS.

TO make and regard proper *distinctions*, is peculiarly necessary in the discussion of scripture doctrines. They ascertain the limits of each truth, and thereby present them to the mind with evidence and energy.

Some *pretended* distinctions however, have no meaning. For instance: we have recently been told, that, "it is needful to make a difference, between the law of God, which was given by Moses, and the law of truth which came by Christ." Whatever propriety there may be in this declaration, in one sense, it conveys an insinuation derogatory to the truth. Admitting the propriety of such a difference, it might be asked, was not the law of Moses the law of truth, and the law of Christ the law of God? Undoubtedly they were: and in this sense there is *no* difference between them, nor do we require any to make them intelligible to us. The law was a shadow of
good

good things to come: Christ was both grace and truth, and is therefore the substance of these types. This is the difference the scripture makes, and any other is unwarrantable.

According to the opinion embraced by some persons, the law is not to be discarded till they are regenerated. It is to be their *schoolmaster to bring them to Christ*; but it is *then* to be annihilated; though Christ at his death, they say, abolished it, yet it is not disannulled by virtue of his cross, till it has done its office in conducting them to the Saviour, but then they take a final and joyful leave of it. This is a truly nice distinction, and reminds me of the doctrine of CERINTHUS, respecting the person of Christ. He taught that *Christ* was a happy and glorious being, who chose for his habitation, the person of *Jesus*, a man of the most illustrious sanctity; and, descending in the form of a dove, entered into him at his baptism. That when *Jesus* was taken captive, *Christ* ascended up on high, so that the man *Jesus* alone was subjected to the pains of an ignominious death*. Thus with many, the law is attended with a divine sanction, till they commence Christians, and begin the spiritual conflict, but then its divinity re-ascends to God, and it becomes a dead letter. Which of these two opinions is most absurd, I leave my reader to determine. But to proceed,

I. There is a difference in the *terms* used with regard to this subject. We read of a *law*, a *covenant*,

* LARDNER'S *Hist. of Heretics*, Book II. Ch. 4. Sect. 4.

and

and a *testament*; which may be thus characterised. A law and a *testament* are *absolute*, and do not imply any consent of the party under them, but a *covenant* differs from both these, as it requires the consent of both parties. Now it is certain that though our obedience is a conformity to the word of God, which is the rule of it, and which therefore in all its parts, has the force of a law; yet at the same time, as it originally partook of the nature of a *covenant*, (of which the tree of life was the symbol) it retains now the form of a *covenant*, again renewed; and by the death of Christ, becomes a *testament*, and will so remain. Hence we learn the evangelical purposes for which the law is continued, and the wisdom of God is discovered in ruling his church, by such a glorious sceptre, as is now swayed by the hand of Christ as King in Zion.

II. The law has significantly been distinguished into *moral*, *ceremonial*, and *judicial*. In the *first* part it respects all men as rational creatures: in the *second* it regards the Jews as the peculiar people of God: and in the *last* it relates to the affairs of Israel as a kingdom. Hence we learn our own interest in the law. As moral agents and accountable creatures, the moral law still obliges us to obey it, nothing having transpired to make it void. But since Jesus Christ has established the gospel the types have ceased, and the ceremonial law has been abolished. The Jews being dispersed, no more appear as a people, governed by the laws given them by God. Now as Christians, we certainly have nothing to do with the law, either

as ceremonial or judicial, though we are bound by it as moral; unless any person chooses to assert, that the gospel makes men *irrational*, and dissolves all the relations of our natural state, in doing which he would give no very substantial proof, of his own rationality.

This distinction is constantly maintained in the scriptures, and was *first* created in the promulgation of the law itself. The ceremonial law concerned only the Jews; it was therefore given to Moses *in private*, in the Tabernacle*, and fell with the Tabernacle, when the veil was rent in twain. The moral law concerned the whole world, and it was therefore given in *sight of all the people*, on the top of a mountain, and will endure when every mountain and hill shall be removed. The judicial part of the law, which is more indifferent than the rest, and may stand or fall as seems best for the good of the people, was given, neither so private as the one, nor so public as the other, but in a mean between both†. From this it appears, that the manner in which God dealt with the people, gave the intimation for a distinction, so far from perplexing the mind, that it leads us, in the most easy and natural way, to the knowledge of the truth.

III. *Human impotency* cannot invalidate the divine law. Our inability is itself a sin, as well as the fruit and the cause of sin, and so it necessarily involves us

* *Lewit. i. 1.* † *LIGHTFOOT'S Works, vol. I. p. 1028.*

in misery. *Prima et Maxima peccantium poena est Peccasse* *. By the first transgression we lost our strength to perform that duty, which God has enjoined upon us. But this cannot possibly affect the law, which for substance was given *prior* to the fall, and remains the same rule of rectitude and equity, subsequent to it. Now this ought not to be objected to by Christians, since the covenant of grace exhibits Christ, not only as our *righteousness*, but also as our *strength* †. In the former capacity he removes our guilt by his blood, in the latter he assists us in duty by his Spirit. Thus the apostle at one time complains of his *guilt and weakness* ‡, but considering the all-sufficiency of Christ, he rejoices in the hope of future glory §, and his ability for present exercises ||.

IV. There is a difference between a *believer* and *his personal acts*. A man once justified is not as to his *state*, under the curse of the law, or liable to the vindictive justice of God; but when he is led aside from the path of duty, and commits sin the law is violated, and guilt is contracted, so that his *actions* merit punishment, and he is delivered from it, only by virtue of that same blood, to which he was at first indebted for pardon. To confound these things is either, wholly to abolish the law, or to establish it in its full force as a covenant of life, both which things ought carefully to be avoided.

* SENECA *epist.* lib. xvi. ep. 2. † *Isaiab* xlv. 24. ‡ *Rom.* vii. 18.
§ *Rom.* v. 2. || *Cor.* iii. 5.

V. Obedience may be rendered as the *fruit of love*, and from a *sense of obligation at the same time*. This is to many a paradox. It is however with others, a constant and essential part of sound experience. To connect any thing besides love with religious obedience, is usually called *legality*. Love is to be the principle, rule, and end of every action. It is true, that without love we cannot spiritually or cheerfully serve God. Neither can we without some rule. Suppose a man had to pass through an intricate wilderness, perfectly unacquainted with the way, and yet under the necessity of accomplishing his journey, to obtain some very desirable and important object. His love to the thing aimed at may be supreme and operative, and though ignorant of the way, report may induce him to be well affected to it; but to the friendly assistance of a guide, he must be indebted, to pursue his journey with safety. In this case the man trusts his guide as such, and pursues his path according to the directions given: it is the prospect of final success in the journey itself, that animates him, and causes him to follow the counsel of his conductor. In this case love and duty are *consistent*; and so they are in a Christian. It is the love he has to Christ, that draws him forward in the heavenly road, and preserves him from that abuse of the law, which if destitute of such a divine principle he would make. This indeed is only the result of Christ's express injunction, *if ye love me, keep my commandments* *.

* John xiv. 15.

VI. The law must not be *separated* from the Spirit of God. Such as do this are really legal. The law is only light to the understanding, the Spirit of God must circumscribe the heart to love and delight in it *. To disregard the sacred and all-sufficient influence of the Spirit, in obeying the law is to seek life by works, and to render the provision of the gospel unnecessary. But when we attempt to glorify God, in his appointed way, and under a consciousness of our own weakness, seek those supplies of strength from Christ, which are communicated by the Spirit, and under his influence, live and act for God, we may then regard the law, and be far enough from a *just* charge of legality. It seems the precepts of the law, and the aid of the Spirit are connected; to disregard either is dangerous; if we make light of the Spirit, we are guilty of presumption: And if we neglect the law, we open a door to uncertainty and licentiousness. But if we *unite* both, and never regard one without seeking the other, we shall be enabled to honour God, and advance in holiness.

VII. We should not confound the *threatening and the sentence* of the law together. This one has lately done in asserting concerning believers, that, “ if they
“ are still under the law, as their rule of life they are
“ under the curse; for a precept without a sentence
“ is no law; therefore if this is the case, they are
“ not justified from all things, nor from the worst,
“ nor from any thing, for there is no separating the

* BURGESS's *Vindiciæ Legis*, p. 12.

“ precept

“precept of the law from the sentence.” This either proves *nothing* at all, or else it proves *too much*. It amounts to this. In this kingdom there exists a law, which threatens death for forgery.—The precept and the sentence cannot be separated; therefore, as we are all under the law, we are under the sentence. This is highly absurd. The fact is, that the precept and the sentence are quite distinct; the precept must first be violated, before there can be any sentence justly pronounced; so that numbers are never involved in the sentence, as they are clear from the charge, who nevertheless are bound by the law. Nor is it otherwise with the law of God: The sentence is never pronounced, or the punishment inflicted, till the crime has been committed which merits it; and then the justice of God is suitably displayed. There is then nothing so unfavourable to the gospel, in establishing the law as a rule of life, when we may live under its government, and yet not be under its curse. If it was not so, surely every person would wish to be delivered from it.

CHAP. III.

ARGUMENTS.

SECTION I.

AN *Athenian* once put this question to a *Spartan*, *What walls do you like best?* to which he replied, *Those which will defend themselves.* Christians love the *truth* because it is *invincible*, because it need not be indebted to foreign assistance for its defence, but can resist all attacks, from its own internal resources. I shall offer my reader some arguments in defence of the law, founded, not on the authority of men, but on the sovereignty of God, and the veracity of divine revelation.

The attributes and perfections of God, declare the moral law to be of perpetual obligation to men. God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being; from these perfections result the *propriety* of any law which God is pleased to enact. He is also
wise

wise, powerful, holy, just, and gracious, which considered in reference to such a law, prove it to be *immutable*. If otherwise, his wisdom is impeached in the construction of it,—his power in subjecting his creatures to it,—his holiness in requiring their obedience,—his justice for avenging any deviation from it,—and his mercy, for being exercised towards an object, whose misery might otherwise be prevented.

“ The moral law is a transcript as far as was necessary to man, of the divine mind; and it is also a perfect rule of action, by which his intelligent creatures must work, both to *be* perfect, and to *show* their perfection*.” Hence the law is properly considered, as representing the *perfection* of God, which it cannot do if liable to be abrogated. It is required of Christians to be perfect, *as their Father in heaven is perfect*†. To attain this end there must be a rule made known, by a conformity to which, such a proficiency is made, as is adequate to our present capacities and advantages. But where will such a rule be found, if the moral law is discarded? There certainly is nothing but that, concerning which even a pretension is made, to such an exalted and universal authority. To promulgate a code of laws, suited to the circumstances of all mankind, and to give such laws a subsequent establishment, is certainly an indication that they are designed to be perpetual; for, the same reasons will exist in the future circumstances of men, to render

* *Horæ Solitariae*, vol. i. p. 372. † *Matt.* v. 48.

them

them necessary for restraint and direction, as are sufficient to warrant their first imposition. For instance: " God could not require the love of himself, if the " command to love God is founded, not in his nature, but in his arbitrary good pleasure; as by the " same rule, he might have enjoined the hatred of " himself; for things in their own nature *indifferent*, " whoever has the right of commanding, has also " that of forbidding, and of requiring the contrary *." The perfections of Jehovah, manifested in his revelations, evidence the moral fitness and propriety of all his ordinances; and, in tracing the natural consequences of these things, we discover those relations and characters which God as lawgiver necessarily sustains. If he has sufficient wisdom to constitute, and sufficient authority to impose laws, he has sufficient power to execute those laws, and to punish any omission or transgression of them. Hence he assumes the character of a *Judge*, to scrutinize the conduct, and reward or punish the actions of men. These things the prophet joins together when he declares, *The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King, he will save us* †. But if the moral law has been abrogated by Jesus Christ, then the office of King is needless, and the character of judge is superseded; but this supposition so completely *mutilates* the perfections of God, that he no longer remains a suitable object of faith and worship; but if it is admitted, that the law is still in force as a rule of conduct, then Jehovah appears *glorious in holiness* ‡.

* WITSELL *Orcon. Fæd. lib. i. cap. iii. §. 14.* † *Isaiab xxxiii. 22.*

‡ *Exod. xv. 11.*

SECTION II.

THE manner in which the law was promulgated, will afford us another argument in proof of its perpetual authority. It was given on Mount Sinai by the LORD JESUS CHRIST. This circumstance ought ever to be remembered, as one of the most important, relative to the giving of the law. In confirmation of it, let us consult a few scripture testimonies. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused HIM that SPAKE ON EARTH, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven, but who was this person that spake on earth? that it was not Moses, is evident, for Stephen in his defence before the High Priest, declares concerning Moses, This is he that was in the church in the wilderness, with the ANGEL which spake to him in the Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, who received the lively oracles to give unto us†. This same ANGEL who gave them the law, was also their guide through the wilderness; but, that he was not a created being, appears by the injunctions laid upon the people to obey him? Now the apostle Paul uses this language, when speaking of their conduct to this ANGEL. Neither let us tempt CHRIST, as some of them also tempted him, and were destroyed of serpents‡. Hence then it is evident that CHRIST himself, made the revelation of the moral law to the Israelites, and actually led*

* Heb. xii. 25. † Acts vii. 38. Exod. xxiii. 20, 22.

‡ 1 Cor. x. 9.

them

them through the wilderness, in the dispensation of it. But Christ did nothing at that time, which was inconsistent with any of his subsequent actions; consequently he never abolished that law, which he gave to *Moses*. If he had at the time of its promulgation, an intention to abolish it during his personal ministry upon earth, he would certainly have given some intimation of this at Sinai; nor would he have led the Israelites, all through the wilderness, agreeable to the tenor of that covenant; and permit his prophets and apostles to interpret that journey, as typical of the true believers progress to glory, if the law itself, had been thus restrained to the former dispensation. Christ never has revoked this law, or given the least reason to expect that he will do it * so that *we are not without law to God, but under the law to Christ* †.

A most significant type of this, is given us in the *ark and tables of stone*. After *Moses* had received the second tables from God, he says, *I turned myself, and came down from the Mount, and put the tables in the ark which I had made, and there they be as the Lord commanded me* †. The ark is a type of *Christ*. The two tables were of stone, to denote, either the hardness of the human heart, or the duration of the law; their being put into the ark, signified the being of the law in the heart of *Christ* §.—his subjection to the law, and his fulfilment of it,—and,

* I speak here only of the moral and preceptive part of the law, agreeable to the distinction made in p. 22, 23.

† 1 Cor. ix. 21. ‡ Deut. x. 5. Vide also GILL's *Sermons and Tracts*, vol. I. p. 268. § Psalm 40. 8.

that

that they were to abide there, signifies, its authority is to be coeval with the reign of Christ in his church. As long therefore as Christ remains King in Zion, and the substance of the types, so long must the moral law be acknowledged as the rule of Christian practice.

SECTION III.

PERFECTION is a necessary adjunct of the law *, as it proceeds from an infinite God. To suppose any defect in his legislation, would be the height of presumption; and involve men in the charge of blasphemy. Every command is wisely constituted, and the whole system is admirably connected. The sanction of the law is sufficient to enforce it. The promises made to obedience, and the threatenings pronounced against disobedience; together with the fear of the Lord, proposed as the motive of duty, conspire to render it a revelation worthy of God, and suitable to man.

In God's commands see truth and goodness join;
Immortal rectitude is every line.

In this view of the law, the apostle says, *It is holy, and just, and good* †, which it could not be, if imperfect; because it could neither express the holiness of God, or require that conformity in us, which God expects. It could not answer the purposes of justice,

* Psalm xix. 7. † Rom. vii. 12.

either in preventing, or punishing sin. It could not be good, as it would be insufficient to promote the glory of God, or secure the happiness of man; but to these things it is equal, and therefore merits the apostolic approbation.

The law of God appears to be the ground-work of those prophecies, with which God favoured his Church before the appearance of Christ. What are the discourses of the prophets and messengers of God, but *expositions* of this very law. This was done on purpose to make the will of God more familiar to the people, and to leave them without excuse in the neglect of obedience. Now, if the moral law is abrogated, the expositions of it, and inferences drawn from it, are likewise made void; and so we must be deprived of an extensive and important part of divine revelation. If this is the case, it is absolutely inconsistent with our liberty, to make use of that which has a tendency to bring us again into bondage. But how did Christ act with regard to these prophecies, which were explanatory of the law, did he reject them? Certainly not. So far from it, he applied many of them to himself, and to the circumstances of his spiritual kingdom; and, after his ascension, gave many more revelations to his Church by his servant John. If Christ had seen any imperfection in the law, doubtless he would have added *new* precepts to it, when he was on earth; but, we find nothing of this kind ever took place. The law, as it then was, had his approbation. It is generally allowed, that the more perfect any law is, the more deserving

deserving it is of attention ; and if we apply this remark to the divine law, which, as to its nature and substance, is absolutely perfect, we must acknowledge that it is worthy of constant and universal obedience.

“ Why should any wish to be free from the law, considered as a rule of moral conduct ? it commands nothing but what is right, nor forbids any thing but what is wrong. As the things it requires are worthy of God, and useful to man, so the things it prohibits are hateful to him and hurtful to us *.”

SECTION IV.

THE relation in which men stand to God, renders the existence of the law both expedient and necessary. The work of creation gave God the right of governing, so that whatever he made was subject to his authority ; and though a great change has taken place in the state of men and things, by the entrance of sin, still that relation subsists between God and his creatures, which originally existed. Suppose we consider men as the *sons* of God, which in the latitude of the word they all are, there is then a filial obedience to be rendered to God as their father ; or, if we consider men as the *servants* of God, they are appointed to perform his will. Both these relations we now sustain ; nor are they merely nominal, they are

* BOOTH'S *Death of Legal Hope*, p. 120.

characters expressive of what we ought to be, and aim to attain to. But how vain will the attempt prove, if we are left in the dark as to the way, and without a rule by which to walk. Happily for us, this is not the case. *God has written to us the great things of his law, and applied them to men, as his sons and servants. A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear *?* What is this, but a reproof for neglecting to render that obedience to the will of God, necessary under such relations.

Now these relations Christ came not to *destroy*, but to *cement*; if he had done so, he must have left us without law, because they are inseparably connected. But “this would be to *establish* our rebellion against God, rather than to *suppress* it †,” which cannot be admitted by any person, since Christ is still by means of the gospel subduing men to the obedience of faith, and giving them power in a spiritual sense, to become the sons of God. Besides to what an uncomfortable state must the human mind be reduced, if thus left to itself; in the midst of uncertainty it might be right, or it might be wrong, but could never ascertain the rectitude of any action, from the want of a standard by which to try and prove it.

The mind, when turn'd adrift, no rules to guide,
Drives at the mercy of the wind and tide:
Fancy and passion toss it to and fro,
Awhile torment, and then quite sink in woe.

* *Mal.* i. 6.

† *MANTON'S Works, Vol. II. p. 35.*

The more we keep our relation to God in remembrance, the more necessary and valuable will the law appear as the rule of action; and, in proportion as we esteem it, shall we be concerned to be found walking in the path of duty.

It is reported of a *Lacedemonian*, when in the field of battle, that he had his sword drawn to cut down an enemy; but, upon hearing the signal of retreat, he stopt his hand: being afterwards asked, why he did not kill an enemy he had in his power, he answered, *because I judged it preferable to obey the General's orders, by not killing him.* Christ is the Captain of our salvation, and though he sounds a retreat from the law as a covenant, we only obey our General's orders, by sparing it as the rule of life.

SECTION V.

JESUS Christ rendered perfect obedience to the law. This was one part of his covenant engagement on the behalf of his people, and in the discharge of which he was employed, during the whole of his residence upon earth. Hence the Apostle says, that *when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law* *. It was necessary, if he took on him our nature, that he should be

* Gal. iv. 4.

under the same obligations with us, and stand in the same relation both to God and his law. Now, when he was made under the law, his first work was to rescue it from that state of neglect, into which it was brought by the pride and sin of man; then to restore it to its primitive glory, by exemplifying the purity and equity of it in his own practice; and lastly, by enduring its penalty incurred by sin, to rescue men from its curse, and to establish its authority as a rule. *Thus the Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake, because he magnified the law, and made it honorable* *. By comparing the obedience of Christ, and the requisitions of the law together, we learn the perfection of his righteousness; and discover it to be every way suitable for our justification before God. Now, if Jesus Christ was himself thus subject, and obedient to the law, and it was to him a rule, we cannot follow his example without adopting it as the guide of our lives. True it is, that on the cross, Christ invalidated the law as a covenant: in token of which, the veil of the temple was rent †. But, considered as a rule,

* *Isaiab*, xlii. 21.—“The work of redemption magnifies God’s law, by the perfect obedience that Christ gave to the commandments of it, and the perfect satisfaction he gave to the threatenings of it—it magnifies it, as it is a work of infinite love: for every thing that strengthens the motives to obey the law, magnifies the law by strengthening the force of it; and a manifestation of infinite love magnifies and strengthens the motives to obey a law, the substance of which is love, and the chief part of which is to love the lawgiver himself.”

Vide MACLAURIN’S *Essay on the Prophecies*, p. 412.

† *Matt.* xxvii. 51.

he

he had, prior to his death, discharged all its demands, so that it was not made void, but confirmed; and his death affords an additional argument for rendering obedience to it.

We must not forget that memorable declaration made by our Lord, *Think not, says he, that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets, I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil; for verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled* *. And in order to convince the Jews of this, Christ expounds it in a spiritual sense, shewing them that the law took cognizance of secret sins—of thoughts and evil desires†. But for this there could be no occasion, nay there could be no propriety in it, if this very law was to cease, as to its obligation, in so short a time. It is evident from these things, that our Lord neither *forefaw* or *designed* such an abrogation, and consequently it cannot be affirmed of the law, without a reflection on the wisdom and integrity of the Redeemer. His own exposition of the law is a doctrinal establishment of it: his obedience is a practical refutation of that error which opposes it: and the writing of it in the fleshy tables of the heart by his Spirit, is a demonstration of that delight which he takes in the obedience of his saints.

* *Matt. v. 17, 18.*

† *Matt. v. 27, 28.*

SECTION VI.

THE constitution of the Gospel does not require the law to be abrogated as a rule of life. Those take up a false idea of both, who imagine that the one stands in *opposition* to the other; and that the latter dispensation cannot exist, without the destruction of all former ones. By a number of typical ordinances, God prepared the way for the establishment of the Gospel: but these very types were all of them significant and instructive, and taught the gospel to the Israelites. Now, if the law and gospel were formerly so connected, what should hinder the continuance of a relation, for “the gospel makes no change of the nature of things; makes nothing cease to be due to God from us, which the law of nature made due, nor renders any defect innocent, which is in its own nature culpable and faulty*.” So that we may fairly infer, that as it had power to rule the conduct, that it still retains that power. “In this sense it is added to the gospel, as the rule is to the hand of the workman; for as the rule worketh nothing without the hand of the artificer, to guide and moderate it, because of itself it is dead: and the workman worketh nothing without his rule; so the law can only shew what is good, but give no power at all to do it (for that is the work of the Spirit by the gospel) yet evangelical grace directs

* *Howe's Works Vol. I. p. 365.*

“a man to no other obedience than that of which
“the law is the rule*.”

No person better knew the spirituality of the law and the latitude of the gospel than the Apostle *Paul*; but so far was he from abolishing the law, that he speaks as if surprised at the insinuation from others. *Do we then, says he, make void the law through faith, yea we establish the law†.* It is no longer armed with terrific curses, but it is fixed on principles which can never be shaken. God now addresses us in language, which at once displays the sovereignty of a king, and the affection of a father. *Arise and be doing, and the Lord be with thee‡.* Who then can reject the command, or slight the promise? No man but he who wishes to separate and oppose them, and who is a declared enemy to both.

The Gospel blends precepts and promises—duty and privilege—obedience and rewards together. In so doing the consummate wisdom of God is displayed, and the perfection of the gospel dispensation manifested. But those who reject the law, cannot allow any connection between that and the gospel, which certainly destroys the very constitution of it; but on the other hand, when the connection is admitted, the constitution is perfect. The apparent severity of precepts is softened by the luxuriency of promises; and what is forbidding in the appearance of the former, is counterpoised by the aspect of the

* *Ep. REYNOLD'S Works, p. 149.*

† *Rom. iii. 31.*

‡ *1 Chron. xxii. 16.*

latter. "The precepts and promises of God always
 "go together in the word, as the veins and arteries
 "do in the body. Wherever there goes a vein that
 "carries blood, there also *accompanies* it an artery
 "that carries spirits; so wherever there is a precept
 "in the word, that enjoins duty, there is also an an-
 "swerable promise that assures comfort*." For
 instance: *if ye do these things, ye shall never fall* †.
 The command here given is to regard those duties of
 which the Apostle had been speaking: and the pro-
 mise annexed to it, is to assure the believer of his
 safety and happiness in the performance of them. We
 then do no injury to the gospel, by connecting it
 with the law. We rather give it more glory, since
 it requires the same obedience in a more spiritual
 manner, and that from the best motives, the love of
 God: If men will legalize the gospel, the fault is their
 own. While the gospel in its constitution and spirit
 leads to obedience; it draws the soul to Christ for
 strength to perform the will of God.

Hold fast this golden chain, let down from Heaven;
 'Twill help your feet and wings: I feel its force
 Draw upwards. Fastened to the pearly gate,
 It guides the way unerring. Happy clue
 Thro' this dark world! 'twas Wisdom's noblest work
 All join'd by power divine, and every link is love.

WATTS'S LYR.

* SPURSTOW on the Promises, p. 12.

† 2 Pet. i. 10.

SECTION VII.

THE various dispensations of religion are harmonious.

—This affords a strong proof of the authority of the Law. Many mistakes arise from an *unconnected* view of the divine dispensations; whereas, if all were considered in their proper order and relation, the strictest harmony might be discovered in them. It would then appear, that the Moral Law is for substance the same as the law of nature*. The necessity for an external revelation of it arose from the ravages of sin upon the soul; but it then became more necessary than ever, and accordingly God makes a new declaration of it. By this we should also learn, that the Moral Law is a *branch* of the Covenant of Grace. The essence of each Covenant consists in having God for the portion of the soul†, and receiving suitable guidance, provision, and defence from him. There is then in effect but *one Covenant*, though made perfect at several times, and by successive dispensations. Is not *eternal life* the great subject of all revelation to lost sinners? and was not this proposed under the law? and to be obtained in the *same way* as under the Gospel, by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who even then was held forth by oblations and burnt offerings. And as to the method of receiving the blessings of salvation, every dispensation required *faith* in the great propitiation for sin; and that

* Rom. ii. 14, 15.

† Exod. xx. 1, 2. Jer. xxxi. 33.

with this principal difference, that before the advent of Christ, faith was to regard the Messiah *promised*; and subsequent to his sufferings, faith is to regard the Saviour *victorious*. So that as to the *subject*, *procuring cause*, and *medium* of all spiritual blessings, every dispensation of religion is for substance the same *. It appears from these considerations, that God has been executing in all ages the great purposes of his sovereign love and efficacious grace—that under every dispensation his operations were successful—and that his great object in the gift of Christ was, *that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are upon earth* †.

If this is the great design which the wisdom of God proposes to execute, every circumstance relative to it must be glorious; and this we shall more easily discern, by considering the majesty and uniformity of the whole plan. “It is only a full survey of all
 “the successive editions of the covenant of Grace
 “which can give us the most comprehensive, and the
 “justest idea of it, in any one edition, or under any
 “one dispensation. Each of them casts a signal and
 “sensible light upon the other: and whatsoever was
 “truly glorious in the whole of them, is as it were
 “summed up in the last dispensation, that is christi-
 “anity, which answers the predictions, and emblems
 “of former ages, and reveals and unfolds many

* WITSEI *Æcon. Fœd. lib. 3. cap. 2. § 2.*

† *Eph. i. 10.*

“things,

“things, that seemed then to be veiled in darkness *.” There is then no propriety in admitting the law to be necessary for the regulation of conduct, till the covenant of grace receives its last addition, and no longer; when at the same time, similar purposes are still to be answered by it, and which must fail without its continuance.

SECTION VIII.

THE Work of Sanctification, implies the continuance of the law, as the rule of life. Let us carefully distinguish between justification and sanctification†. The former is a *release* from the curse of the law, the latter *binds* us to obey it. “The law is exceeding broad, and yet not the more easy to be hit, because you must aim to hit it in every duty of it, with a performance of equal breadth, or else you

* WATTS’S *Harmony of all Religions*. Preface, p. 12.

† The principal difference between these two important doctrines may be thus briefly stated. JUSTIFICATION is the change of a man’s *state*—his liberation from the *guilt* of sin—is the immediate fruit of the *blood of Christ*—The matter of it, the righteousness of Christ, is *without* us—and it gives us a *title* to heaven. But SANCTIFICATION is the change of a man’s *nature and disposition*—a deliverance from the *dominion* of sin, and a restoration to the image of God—is wrought by the immediate operation of the Spirit---the matter of it is *within* us, a divine nature---and it imparts to us a *fitness* for the kingdom of heaven.

“cannot

"cannot hit it at all*. A real Christian cannot be a libertine, but that man is no better, who does not hold himself bound by the law of God. When the sinner is justified, he is regenerated, in which work principles of grace are implanted in the soul, and he now obeys God from the best motives. Obedience is the inseparable fruit of renewing grace. By this the soul has evidence of its relation to God, and interest in him. There is that in his heart that causes him to hate and oppose sin—to love and pursue holiness—and to avoid not only the commission but the appearance of evil.

Oderunt peccare boni virtutis amore.

Hon.

The believer will strive to serve God acceptably. *He now delights in the law of God after the inward man* †; and therefore conforms himself to it in his external conduct. Now in this obedience there is nothing legal, because it is the fruit of faith in Christ, and strength derived from him, by virtue of a vital union. Such a man is no stranger to spiritual peace, which he enjoys as the gift of God, and as the consequence of pardon and acceptance, which cannot be obtained if sin is persevered in. Every sin is a breach of the law, and infallibly brings guilt upon the conscience, which can only be removed by an application to *Christ*, as our *advocate* with the Father: and the exercise of a *direct* act of faith on his obedience and merits; *then* will peace be again restored; and if such experience

* MARSHALL on *Sanctification*, p. 2.

† Rom. vii. 22.

has its proper influence, that soul will in future be more watchful against temptation and sin, and so by his fall gain advantage over his spiritual enemies. Thus are the principles of sin gradually weakened, the mind is made spiritual by the contemplation of Christ and his glory, and *beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image* *.

When God visits his people with the chastising strokes of his rod, it is for their transgressions. And it is no small part of their holiness that is thus communicated. God sanctifies their trials, and overrules them for good, making them subservient to the great purposes of building up his people in hope and holiness. Now let any impartial person judge, how much the law is concerned in, and connected with, these particular circumstances.

Antigonus hearing a man say, that all the actions of Princes were, by virtue of their being such, simply honest and just, made answer, *These things are so among barbarians, but with us nothing is esteemed either just or honorable, but what is really such in its own nature.* Thus it is with evangelical obedience; and hence it follows, that it is always the same, though the requisitions of it may vary, both in form, season, and circumstances. It will appear by reciting the particulars of that obedience, required under the law, that it is the *same* that is now enjoined by the gospel; and if so, that the law may with as much propriety be the rule of it now, as it was at that time. The

* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

law required the service of the heart*, it preferred inward mortification, before external religious duties†; it required every duty to be performed in faith; it enjoined supreme love to God, and joy in him‡. And are any of these things rendered needless by the go'pel? Quite the reverse. They are still required, and are more indispensable than ever. The conduct of *Esther* may serve to exemplify this point. She was obedient to *Mordecai*, all the while she had been under his government; and when she was made *Queen*, she still performed his commandments. *Esther* had not shewed her people, nor her kindred; for *Mordecai* had charged her that she should not§. So when men are engrafted into Christ, they are bound to obey his law; and the grace he imparts will make them still more willing to do it. *Fides efficit quod lex imperat.*—*AUG.* Thus Christ is formed in the soul—hope is invigorated—faith is strengthened—peace is preserved—sanctification is gradually promoted—the law is magnified—Christ is exalted—and God is glorified.

SECTION IX.

THE nature of the general judgement is a proof of the power of the law. The first breach of the law

* *Prov.* iii. 1. † *Isaiab.* i. 11. 16. ‡ *BURGESS'S Vindiciae Legis.* p. 179. § *Esther*, ii. 10.

caused

caused God to assume the character of a judge, and to prepare a throne for the administration of justice. Intimations of this solemn event have been frequently given to the world, by which they have been taught its certain and hasty approach. *I saw the dead*, says the Apostle John, *small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works* *. “Should we pursue this significant allusion, we may say, then will be opened the “book of the law of nature, and mankind will be “tried according to its precepts, and doomed according to its sentence. This is a plain and vast “volume, open and legible now to all that can “read their own hearts, and that have eyes to look “round upon the works of God. Then too will be “opened the book of scripture revelation, in all its “parts, both the law of Moses, and the gospel of “Christ; and according to it, will those be judged “who lived under one or other of these dispensations. “Then will also be opened the book of God’s remembrance: in that are recorded all the thoughts, “words, actions, both good and bad of all the sons “of men. And now the immense account shall be “publickly read before the assembled world; and, “as a counterpart will be opened, the book of conscience, which, though unnoticed, writes our “whole history, as with the point of a diamond †.”

* Rev. xx. 12. † DAVIES’S *Sermons*, Vol. II, p. 21. last edition.

Now if the moral law is not continued as the rule of practice, it cannot be produced in judgement as the standard of rectitude; because, then nothing will be alleged against any person, but what is a violation of some law, which he was bound to obey. We can be judged only for sin; and whatsoever is so by the gospel, is equally so by the law. It is acknowledged by many, that the law is the rule of all *unconverted* persons who are under it, till they are brought to Christ; and consequently all persons dying in a state of sin must be tried by the law; but as we do not find, that the process of judgement differs as to the rule, between the righteous and the wicked, we cannot but conclude the law to be a *universal* standard of righteousness and truth.

Hitherto the law of God has been maintained in its dignity. In swaying the sceptre of universal government, God has preserved his royal law in its purity and influence. "Rather than the divine law
" should lose its honors, Sodom and Gomorrah were
" laid in ashes; the ancient world was destroyed with
" a deluge; the present frame of nature is destined
" to the flames, and all its ungodly inhabitants will
" be condemned to hell. Nay, rather than the least
" tittle should pass unaccomplished, its curse has
" been executed on God's own Son, and all its in-
" junctions have been fulfilled in the person of Jesus
" Christ *." Can we then imagine, that in the last, the closing scene of all, that God will slight his own

law, or that he will excuse such as have done so upon earth! The Judge of the whole world will ever act consistently, and will therefore at last evidence to all men, his invincible hatred to sin, and his supreme love to holiness: and will justify his wisdom in promulgating, and his sovereignty in perpetuating the law.

On such evidence as this, we may with safety rest our cause. In the defence of any truth we have to combat with the prejudices and inclinations of men; but if they are to be gratified, the truth must be relinquished. The truth is inflexible: and sooner or later will the pride of man be humbled, that truth may have an universal empire. Truly happy are such, whose wills are bowed to receive the yoke of Christ: whose hearts are inclined to engage in his service: and whose lives demonstrate, that they are under the influence of his efficacious grace.

With relating and applying the following historical passage, I shall close this chapter. *Lycurgus* the *Lacedemonian* lawgiver, having formed *Sparta* into a republic, and convened the people together, told them, that the commonwealth was so framed, that it would promote their virtue and happiness: but that the most important article of all, he should not deliver to them, till he had consulted the oracle at *Delphos*, for which purpose he should leave them. He then charged them strictly to adhere to, and obey the

laws he had already given, without the least alteration. And having bound them by an oath, he departed. Soon after he sent word, that the oracle had confirmed what he had done, and declared their oath to be of perpetual obligation. Having done this, he went into a voluntary banishment, and ordered, that when he died, his bones should be burnt, and cast into the sea, that no part of him might be carried to *Sparta*, lest they should make a plea of it, to release them from their oath*. How admirably disinterested and wise was the conduct of this legislator; but *infinite* is the wisdom displayed in the dealings of Christ with his saints. He framed and delivered a law, calculated to promote their holiness and joy; and, to convince them of its excellency, was himself made subject to it, and rendered to its holy precepts, the most perfect obedience. But the most important article of all, was to deliver his people from that wrath which they merited for their iniquities, for which purpose he must die on the cross, and suffer an exile from the presence of his Father, and the society of his saints. This was voluntary and unconstrained. Previous to this solemn transaction, he instituted that precious memorial of his sufferings, the Lord's Supper; a solemn obligation on all who partake of it to obey his laws. And when released from the grave, he entered into the most holy place, the residence of the invisible God, from thence has he sent his ambassadors to confirm his institutions, and

* JUSTINI, *Lib. iii. cap. 3.*

to enforce obedience to his righteous commands. Nor has he suffered any thing to transpire, which throws the least reflection upon his ministry when on earth; or that the libertine inclinations of men, can with propriety plead, in excuse for their disobedience. Lord Jesus, thy conduct is wise—thy precepts are pure—thy promises are certain. Favor thy saints with understanding and strength, and they will run the ways of thy commandments with joy.

CHAP. IV.

OBJECTIONS STATED AND ANSWERED.

AS several objections have been urged against what has been advanced, we shall briefly notice the principal of them, and endeavor to give a solution of the difficulties with which they are attended. When we assert that the moral law is a rule of life, it is objected,

1. That such a sentiment *opposes itself to the free grace of God*. Some indeed, seem to apprehend, that the grace of God, and obedience to the law as a rule, are utterly incompatible, and that both cannot exist at the same time. But this proceeds from mistaken ideas of the gospel. The grace of God lays the foundation of redemption from sin; and this not in a limited, but in the most extensive way. It is first manifested in the eternal and unchangeable decree of
God,

God, relative to our salvation; and this purpose of divine mercy to be extended to us in time, respects both the *guilt and power* of sin, a complete emancipation from the fruits and effects of the fall. Let it then be remembered, that the grace of God in its first motion towards sinners, embraced holiness as one of its principal objects; and, that it must have undergone an alteration, if it does not now connect itself with that obedience, which the law requires at our hands. *God has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world.* Here the Apostle asserts the eternity of the purpose of God, and declares it to be the fruit of grace. But what design had God in this? *that we should be holy and without blame before him in love* *. Holiness is the perfection of the creature, and it is his duty to seek it; if he does not, or fails in the attempt, then he is *blameworthy* before God; but if, in consequence of the purpose of Jehovah, a flame of divine love is kindled in the heart, and through strength from Christ he is enabled to follow after holiness, and actually attains to it, then he is *without blame* before God. Now here the grace of God is conspicuous, in proposing the end, in ordaining the means, and in making things subservient to the success of the means.

Man shall find grace,
 And shall not grace find means, that finds her way,
 The speediest of God's winged messengers,
 To visit all his creatures, and to all
 Comes unprevented, unimplored, unsought;
 Happy for man so coming. MILTON.

* Eph. i. 4.

Instead, therefore, of a contradiction between grace and obedience, there is the most perfect *harmony* and *concord*.

It is possible that there may be some little difference in the sentiments of men, with respect to the nature of free grace. If any apprehend it to consist, in an unbounded exercise of compassion, or an unlimited promise of forgiveness, they will find no support for such an idea from the scriptures; but when we consider the grace of God, as a readiness to pardon and receive sinners, who have rendered themselves unworthy of favor, and who are unable to procure it, though they must perish without it: and that this is exercised in a way consistent with all the divine perfections, as God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself; we shall find innumerable testimonies to confirm the declaration in the inspired volume. But when is it *free*? when irrespective of condition, qualifications, or recompence, it saves men from eternal perdition; translates them from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God; and follows them with successive, though unmerited blessings thro' the whole of life. In this case gratitude compels a man to serve God, and will make obedience the pleasing business of his life. The more he does for God, the more will he be abased before him; and the deeper he drinks into the spirit of the gospel, the more will he abhor the thought of being justified by works; and admire the richness, and freedom of divine grace, while he thirsts after more perfect conformity to the

the will of God, it is then a mere *cavil* to assert, that any opposition exists between the law as a rule of life, and the exercise of *free grace*, in the salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ.

Indeed, if we trace this objection in its *consequences*, it will appear to be *destructive* of free grace. If no law is in force, there can be no guilt contracted after union to Christ, and consequently, all that is requisite to salvation, is one single act of forgiveness on the part of God. The subsequent portion of a man's life having no rule to guide it, cannot be charged with imperfections—there is no occasion for pardon—God has no ground to exercise mercy—so that on this principle, we are no otherwise indebted to the grace of God, than as for a favor long since conferred. But a believer finds himself weak, and that he is liable to be overtaken with sin and infirmity, so that he must stand by grace, and be hourly indebted to it for safety. Happy is it for the Christian, that *Christ ever liveth to make intercession for him.*

2. Some will say that it *derogates from the glory of redemption, as a perfect work*, to enforce the law as a rule of life. This, however, we cannot possibly admit, since it involves those who contend for the authority of the law, in a charge of opposing God, and dishonoring Christ. Let this point be decided by the Apostle, who declares that Christ *being made perfect, became the author of eternal salvation to all* *them*

them that obey him *. Here it is observable, that Christ is said to be *perfect*, and that in relation to his mediatorial work; which indeed is no more than what he himself declared with his expiring breath, when he cried, *It is finished* †. Then he is held forth in *consequence* of this, as the author of eternal salvation, or a deliverance from the wrath of God for sin, which would be perpetual. Now the benefits of this salvation are not *indiscriminately* dispensed, but conferred upon such, and only such, as *obey* Christ. But there can be no obedience without a rule, so that if there is no rule, there is no application of this salvation, and so, notwithstanding the perfection of Christ and his work, it proves unavailable.

Possibly some may think that they can evade the force of the Apostle's reasoning, by denying, that the moral law is at all concerned in his declaration. But unless it can be proved, that evangelical obedience differs essentially from what the law requires, it will be found that the moral law is included in the assertion; and, as it stands connected with the per-

* *Heb. v. 9.* The Greek word *υπακούω*, here rendered by the term *obey*, signifies, *to hearken with humble submission*, and implies, both *reverence* and *obedience*; but notwithstanding it principally refers to the reception of the gospel, it is not to be confined to that idea, but doubtless includes in it the whole of evangelical obedience; on the one hand, excluding that unscriptural notion, that good works precede and prepare for justification; and on the other, that injurious assertion, that they are unnecessary to a state of acceptance.

† *John xix. 30.*

fection of the work of Christ, cannot be supposed in the least to eclipse his glory as mediator. Indeed, if that obedience, of which the law is the rule, does not belong to us, Christ did not perform all that he should have done, to render his people's deliverance complete; since, though he has amply provided for our justification and acceptance, he has done nothing that supercedes the necessity of evangelical obedience, or that renders it inconsistent with the Christian character. Christ has so connected faith and obedience together, as evidently to prove, that while in the exercise of it, we receive his righteousness to justify and save us, we are led to those very acts of duty * he has enjoined upon us; and in which there is the most perfect harmony, between the law and the gospel. As to Christ's active obedience to the law for us, "it does not exempt us from personal obedience to it, any more than his sufferings and death exempt us from corporal death, or from suffering for his sake. It is true, indeed, we do not suffer and die in the sense he did, to satisfy justice, and atone for sin: neither do we yield obedience to the law, in order to obtain eternal life by it. By Christ's obedience for us, we are exempted from obedience to the law in this sense, but not from obedience to it as a rule of walk and conversation, by which to glorify God, and express our thankfulness to him for his abundant mercies."

* LUTHER calls obedience *Fidem incarnata*.

III. It may be further objected, that, subjection to the moral law, *is inconsistent with christian liberty*. Much, it must be allowed, depends on the sense which men affix to this term, which has had many definitions, and but few conclusive ideas attached to it. Without law, it is certain, there can be no true liberty, either natural, political, or spiritual. Anarchy would then take precedence of order, and all subordination, and mutual assistance between men would cease to exist. God has established certain rules, by which the natural world is governed, and to which he pays an invariable regard. In society, certain regulations are adopted, such as the existing circumstances of the people render needful and salutary. And in the church of Christ, spiritual ordinances are appointed *, which, as so many laws, require the obedience of all the subjects of the prince of peace. Christian liberty then, consists in a walk and conversation consonant with the divine appointments. If they are neglected, or trespassed upon, then guilt (the worst of bondage) seizes the mind, and the man loses his freedom. So long as the ordinances of

* “ It is a striking evidence of the superlative deceitfulness of
 “ the heart, that the very thing which is appointed by God for the
 “ restraint of corruption, is abused as an incentive to it. You will
 “ easily perceive that we mean the holy law. The original design
 “ of this was to distinguish between sin and duty, to guard man
 “ against the former, and to stimulate him to the practice of the
 “ latter.” JAMIESON'S *Sermons on the Heart*, Vol. II. p. 9.

the gospel are obeyed, holy joy, and sacred composure, possess and govern the soul : we are exempted from slavish fear, and find the affections sweetly going out after God : A sense of pardon fills the heart with holy exultation, and the prospect of glory animates and establishes it : The haven of eternal rest appears in view, nor do we dread either shipwreck or pirates, being assured of safety through the intercession of Christ. The whole of these privileges and blessings, flow purely from the grace of God ; nor must any thing whatever be attributed to the merit of obedience : but at the same time it must be remembered, that they come to us in the way of duty, as the accomplishment of those promises, which God has connected with the precepts of his word. Such therefore as neglect the means of grace, will find religion both unpleasant, and unprofitable work ; while those who live much with God, and seek for communion with him, through Jesus Christ, in a proper regard to divine institutions, will not only attain to such an exalted privilege, but obtain and preserve that liberty, with which Christ makes his people free. And since the law and the gospel are harmonious, as to the nature of the obedience required of the children of God, it is obvious, that to establish the law as the rule of life, does not in the least injure the liberty of the gospel.

True liberty

Always with right reason dwells
Twined, and from her hath no dividual being.

Reason

Reason in man obscur'd, or not obey'd,
 Immediately inordinate desires
 And upstart passions, catch the government
 From reason: and to servitude reduce
 Man, 'till then free.—

MILTON.

It may be further objected, that the Apostle asserts, *we are not under the law**,—yea, that *we are dead to the law†*—that *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness‡*—and that *if we are led by the Spirit, we are not under the law§*. This we admit, and are willing to give the objection its full force. And does not the same Apostle declare, that *we are not without law||*—*the law is holy, just, and good¶*,—*our sufficiency is of God***—*I can do all things through Christ††*. Is the Apostle then to be charged with inconsistency? No man can avoid bringing such a charge against him, if he asserts, that the law is no rule of life. But when we consider the Apostle, as speaking of our exemption from the law as a covenant, and our obligation to it as a rule, his meaning is plain, and intelligible; and his whole system of doctrines harmonious and excellent.

Several other things might be noticed, but as I consider them rather as frivolous cavils, than real objections, and wish to study conciseness, what has been advanced may suffice for this part of the subject.

* Rom. vi. 14.

† Rom. vii. 4.

‡ Rom. x. 4.

§ Gal. v. 18.

|| 1 Cor. ix. 12.

¶ Rom. vii. 12.

** 2 Cor. iii. 5.

†† Phil. iv. 13.

CHAP. V.

THE DANGER AND ABSURDITY OF ANTINOMIANISM.

IT is obvious that whatever affects either the doctrinal or practical part of Christianity, must be prejudicial to vital godliness; and must of course be hurtful to such as make a profession of it. The whole system of truth suffers, by false conceptions of any particular part, and a mistake in one point, may weaken the motives, or bias the mind, as to the reception of the rest. Hence it has been well observed, that "if we give into debasing thoughts of the law, every thing in the death of Christ, and in the Grace of the Gospel, will soon lose its glory with us;

“ us ; and how vain is it to hope to be justified in
 “ any way that shall weaken and undermine the au-
 “ thority and obligation of it *.”

The best preservative against *Antinomianism*, is a close and humble walk with God. While such an intercourse is maintained between God and the soul in a conscientious regard to ordinances, there is little danger of such a deviation from the path of life. But when a man grows lukewarm and formal—when the world is suffered to engross the affections—and when compliance with the practices of the ungodly, are neither disapproved of or avoided, then he enters into that way, which certainly, though perhaps insensibly leads him from God and the power of religion. Few have embraced the errors of *Antinomianism* whose conduct at the time was consistent with the Gospel. They find their spirit opposite to that which genuine religion inspires ; and their practice presents the counter-part of purity and holiness. Urged therefore to seek an asylum, they fly with precipitancy to this resort, determined, that if their disposition and conduct does not correspond with the standard of duty, they will accommodate the standard to their own inclinations ; wishing hereby to avoid the reproaches of conscience, the observation of men, and the displeasure of God—and that by cutting down the law as a cumberer of the ground, they may walk abroad at large, and not stumble. Let such persons

as act thus, beware of total apostacy from the truth, and perpetual despair, as the consequences of their folly.

Persons who avow such sentiments are governed by the rule of contraries. Thus when the prophet declares, that Christ shall *magnify the law, and make it honorable* *, they pretend to acknowledge, that he has done so: but then, according to their notion, it must be through the abolition of it, which is a mode of putting honor upon any thing, perfectly novel and extraordinary. It amounts exactly to this: a person promises to release a prisoner from confinement, by discharging his arrears, and immediately endeavours to subvert the law, by which he was imprisoned, however just and equitable, that he may be able to fulfil his promise. Such a sentiment involves Christ himself in a charge of duplicity. He says, *till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled* †. And yet at that very time, he had a purpose of abolishing the whole, and knew he should do so, when he suffered on the cross. It also carries in it a gross aspersion of the apostle's character, experience, and integrity. *Do we then, says he, make void the law through faith, God forbid, yea, we establish the law* ‡. Now this declaration was made long after the resurrection of Christ, the outpouring of the Spirit, and the actual enjoyment of christian liberty; and therefore must mean

* *Isaiah*, xlii. 21.

† *Matt.* v. 18.

‡ *Rom.* iii. 31.

what

what he so plainly expresses—the standing use and authority of the law. But to establish any thing by disannulling it, is one of those paradoxes more fit for the creed of these spiritual adventurers, than the plain heaven-taught christian. There is, however, one particular in which they are very consistent: *Love is the fulfilling of the law.* By the speeches, writings, and conduct of some persons, they seem to be possessed of a very small degree of this grace, or are *very penurious* in the exercise of it; so that while they cast the law to the moles and the bats, they ought not to be reproached for the want of that, which is properly the companion of the law. Probably they think it legal, thus to exercise the affections; and, that it evidences a noble mind to lift up their hands against every man. We leave them unenvied in the possession of such a spirit, while we pray that our hearts may be more expanded by this heavenly visitant.

The law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.* We discover by it the contrariety of sin, to the mind and will of God, and so learn its nature and desert. We are taught by it the impossibility of obtaining justification by works, and are compelled to seek refuge in Christ, from the wrath of God. This, with many, is the *whole* work of the law; it is then they say, written in the heart, and every external obligation ceases. But in the description given by the scriptures, of this work of the Spirit on the soul, no-

* Gal. iii. 24.

thing of this kind occurs : no promises to this effect are made : neither does experience confirm it. When the soul is brought off from the law as a covenant, and depends upon Christ for salvation, no law is then written in his heart *different* from what was there before, but he has better views given him of that—sees his obligations to obey it—feels an inclination to do so—has his understanding will and affections prepared for obedience—and strength is communicated for the performance. To talk then of obeying a law written in the heart, besides what was naturally inscribed there, and graciously confirmed, is unscriptural and absurd.

Some persons assert, that *Love* is the rule of a Christians practice. This, however, is neither reason or religion. Love is no more a rule, than fear or aversion, as connected with evil or suffering. It is that *principle* from which every true believer acts towards God, and which renders his obedience so pleasant and comfortable to himself. There is a connection between the motive of duty, and the standard of it : but there is an essential difference between them ; it may be thus illustrated. The sun-dial and clock are two artificial measures of time, which though they give the same account of its motions, yet do it in a very different manner. The clock does it by a motion of its own. The dial by a motion of the sun upon the lines drawn upon it. Thus the same duties of religion are performed in a very different way, by those who make a profession of it. Some

have a spring of motion in themselves, and the weight that actuates it is love. Others, like dials, are as useless posts in a gloomy day, and are destitute of all principle of motion *. Let a man then be made acquainted with God, and his law, he will know the object and rule of his duty, and the love of God shed abroad in his heart, will excite him to regard and obey it.

Such inconsistent views of the gospel as these, have led some men to talk about *imputed sanctification*. This, no doubt, accords with the wish of many persons, who would be much better satisfied with the gospel than they are at present, if they could obtain holiness on such easy terms. But sanctification is an inwrought work of the Spirit, who must be received as the gift of God, according to the promise of Christ, for this very purpose. It is the work of the Spirit to mortify inbred corruptions—to purify and cleanse the soul—and, in a progressive manner, to restore the image of God in man. Now, however this may result from the death of Christ, as it certainly does, yet it is effected in a way, very different from the justification of a sinner, where the righteousness of Christ, being placed to his account, he is acquitted from guilt.] In this work, righteousness is produced in us, by the operations of the Spirit. Hence it appears, that justification is in its own nature a proper object of imputation;

* SPURSTOW'S *Spiritual Chymist*, Med. 37.

whereas

whereas sanctification neither is or can be, and whoever apprehends the contrary, cannot avoid confounding doctrines, which ought ever to be kept distinct.

It must be admitted, that where no law exists, there can be neither transgression or punishment—good works or reward, but that these things are real, is evident to those who make the least observation. *If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgements; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes* *. This is the language of a reconciled God, to a covenant people. He declares his regard to his law, and his expectation, that they should also respect it; if they do not, he will chastise them for their disobedience. And yet, in all this, he keeps in mind his gracious purpose, and promises, and actually fulfills them; for it is added, *Nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail: My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.* But suppose these things are reversed, which the abolition of the law certainly produces, there is nothing consolatory in this noble passage. God cannot in justice inflict any punishment, nor so much as give tokens of displeasure, there being no proper cause for any such thing. Attached to this is the idea of perfection, for a man

* *Psalms lxxxix. 30—34.*

must at least be in that state, who has no occasion for the law. This naturally produces pride.

Pride is the liv'ry of the prince of darkness,
Worn by his slaves, who glory in their shame.
A gaudy dress but tarnished, rent, and foul,
And loathsome to the holy eye of heav'n.

THEODOSIA.

Hence follows, as in a train, a thousand other evils, which, in their consequences, soon convince the perpetrator of them, that his fancied release from the law is but a delusion, and that he needs Christ as much for an advocate to restore his peace, as he did for a sacrifice to expiate his guilt, and bring him near to God.

Unwilling as men are to acknowledge the pernicious influence of their evil examples, it will one day be laid to their charge; if not in a measure visited immediately upon them. *They that forsake the law praise the wicked; but such as keep the law, contend with them* *. Therefore, as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust, because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the holy one of Israel †. Many persons are infected with a spirit of infidelity, and discard all religion, both natural and revealed, but to what is this to be attributed? doubtless to the errors of education, and the licentious principles, and practices, of some who make a pro-

* Prov. xviii. 4.

† Isaiah v. 24.

session of the gospel. Happy would it be for themselves, as well as for others, if they gave no reason from their deportment, to call in question their sincerity.

It is not likely that any man understands the nature of holiness, who depreciates and neglects good works. With such persons exhortations of every description are improper, and always unseasonable. Hence has arisen an aversion to practical preaching; and the censure others have cast upon addresses to unconverted sinners, as if they were injurious to the cause of real religion, and the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom. While, however, Ministers have the example of Jesus Christ, his apostles, and faithful servants in all ages before them, let them never be afraid to sound an *alarm* in God's holy mountain. The most abundant success has ever accompanied such declarations of the truth; and if we may form a judgement of the future progress of the gospel, from what prophecy holds forth as yet to be accomplished, we have reason to believe, that such as are faithful to God and men, in their ministry, shall turn many to righteousness.

Antinomianism appears then to rest upon false principles—to confound proper distinctions—to oppose scriptural argument—to create needless objections and cavils—and to involve men in absurdities and danger. Let us unite prayer and watchfulness, that we may avoid the evils of error, and obtain the privileges of truth.

PRACTICAL ADDRESS.

WHEN the Apostle asserts, that *the law is good, if a man use it lawfully**, he intimates, not only that it may be perverted and abused, but that there is an obligation upon believers, to apply it to its proper uses. In all cases, serious self-examination is an important duty, but in the present instance, it will be peculiarly serviceable, as it will assist us to make a right application of the truth which has been advanced. By attending to the following particulars, we may in some measure ascertain, whether we have properly, or improperly used the law.

I. *It discovers the evil, and aggravation of sin.* It is essential to true repentance, that we are made acquainted with the nature of transgression, since no man will humble himself on the account of any particular act, till he discovers the guilt and evil of it, which he certainly cannot do, if he neglects that law of which his sin is the violation. It would be impossible for us to think so lightly of sin, and feel so little

* 1 Tim. i. 8.

on the account of it as we do, if we were better acquainted with the excellency of the divine law. Such as are disposed to extenuate sin, or that carelessly forget it, proclaim their ignorance of the commands of God. But those persons who are the subjects of conviction, find *sin by the commandment exceedingly sinful* *; they can no longer indulge levity or indifference. A deep impression has been made on their minds, of their danger and misery, and they are filled with sincere concern for their numerous and aggravated iniquities. Their souls are bowed down under the conscious load of sin, with which they are chargeable; their former hardness and insensibility disappear, and they are filled with contrition and *godly sorrow, which worketh repentance not to be repented of* †. Such are the views of sin produced by the law, when the Spirit of God opens and applies it to the conscience, and leads the sinner to the cross of Christ, to behold him suffering the punishment of sin, as the surety of his people. So that as one observes, "The heart of man is broke as a flint, with something hard and soft together. A hammer and a pillow, is the best way to break a flint. A prison and a pardon, a curse and a Saviour, is the best way to humble and convert a sinner."

II. *It discovers the insufficiency of self-righteousness to justify a sinner.* We lose one great benefit to be derived from the law, if this knowledge is not acquired. Who can seriously consider the terms on which the

* Rom. vii. 13.

† 2 Cor. vii. 10.

law proposes life; and contrasting them with his own proficiency, imagine he shall finally succeed, in working out his own salvation? The law says, *cursed is every one that continueth not, in all things, that are written to do them* *. There must be no failure in any respect, nor at any time, for *whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all* †. Now no man whatever has yet arrived so near to these conditions, as to keep the law with one exception only, much less to continue in perfect obedience; so that to expect justification by works, would be the grossest self-deception. This must, in some measure, be obvious to most persons; but the believer has a particular persuasion of it, and dares not therefore place any dependence in himself, but commits his

* Gal. iii. 10.

† James ii. 10. — The difficulties that attend this passage in the view of many persons, are thus judiciously removed by an able commentator. "Admitting," says he, "that any one were exactly to keep all the rest of the precepts of God's law, the sum of which is love: yet, if he violates it only in one single instance, he, by just construction, is guilty of a breach, though not of the whole of the law, yet of the whole law, and by its sentence is condemned as such; because he as really sins against the authority of the lawgiver by one act of disobedience to any of its precepts, as if he had broke them all; and so God is as truly, though not as much, offended by one transgression, as a man is hurt by the injury, that is done to only one member of his body; and the whole system of the law is broke thereby, as a chain is by breaking only one of its links."

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whole cause to God. He will be ready to rank himself with the chief of sinners, and utter his complaints in the words of the Publican, *God be merciful to me a sinner**. He discerns such an imperfection in his own righteousness, that he is ashamed to view it himself, much less dare he present it before God, for his inspection and acceptance. When he considers what he ought to have been, and compares it with what he really is, he renounces every idea of merit, and comes to the throne of Grace, as a guilty, helpless, and unworthy sinner. He comes rejoicing, that it is not a throne of judgement, but that he can draw near to God, through Christ, with hopes of success.

III. Hence we learn the necessity of the righteousness of Christ, to be imputed to us, for our justification. Discovering that we neither have, or can attain to a legal righteousness of our own, it becomes a matter of serious enquiry, where may we find that righteousness, without which we must perish? This renders the gospel a joyful sound, as it proclaims the all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ: and exhibits that wedding garment, which alone can prepare the soul for the future glory of the heavenly state. Our circumstances dictate the necessity of such a righteousness, as the gospel reveals; and the instructions of the Spirit of God, direct us to embrace Christ, and by faith to rest upon him. We not only learn the insufficiency of our own works, but that nothing can possibly be

* Luke xviii. 13.

of any advantage to us, but what comes from Christ; and that to trust in any name but his, would terminate in utter ruin. And when the law has thus
 “ forced the lines of self-righteousness, and driven
 “ us to Jesus Christ, that only citadel of safety, for
 “ acceptance and salvation, it serves as a rule for
 “ our conduct. Then it shews us like a friend and a
 “ guide, how to order our conversation, and adorn
 “ our profession: how to glorify God, and express
 “ our gratitude to Christ *.”

IV. The reception of Christ and his righteousness, will be followed by *an act of self-dedication to him*. We shall acknowledge his propriety in, and his authority over us. Prior to this emancipation from the galling yoke of sin, we were under the most sacred obligations to serve God: Now these obligations are confirmed, and new ones added. “ They are happy,
 “ that so look upon the law of God as to be made
 “ sensible, that the more evidence they have of their
 “ freedom from the curse of the law, to be not the
 “ less, but so much the more, obliged to obey the
 “ law †. From this conviction, we shall endeavour
 to live to God, agreeably to the revelation he has made of his will in the scriptures. The glory of God will now be the great aim of all our actions, and in the various circumstances, in which we are placed, we shall endeavour to promote it. We shall not be satisfied with a fruitless profession, or a dead

* HERVEY's *Dialogues*, Vol. II. p. 34.

† LEIGHTON'S *Select Works*, p. 375.

faith. Grace in the soul is an active principle, and will not only direct to what is right, and ought to be pursued; but will discover what is wrong, and help us to avoid it. What interest the law has in these things, may be discovered by considering, that as God is not glorified by a breach of it, he is only and truly honored when we walk agreeable to it.

V. We may hereby form *some judgement of our advances in the divine life*. At first setting out in religion, we were as travellers *commencing a journey*. It is to be presumed, that each successive day witnesses some progress in the proposed path. It constitutes an important evidence of the truth of grace, that we grow in grace. Many great attainments are to be made, by such as enter into the way of life; and, after the greatest acquisitions, much is still before us. Our minds may yet be more spiritual; our wills more submissive; our affections more pure and heavenly; our thoughts better regulated; our conversation more agreeable to our profession and prospects; our knowledge may be much increased; our faith strengthened; and every grace of the holy Spirit invigorated. Now the very means which are appointed to promote these important purposes, afford us evidence, that they are accomplished. By the law of God we may form some judgement of this matter. Do we love and spiritually serve God? entertain suitable thoughts of his character, and maintain a reverential awe of his name? is the Sabbath, and are the ordinances of
 God's

God's house pleasant and profitable? do we properly regard personal, and relative duties of every kind? This is not only the sum of the law, but what the Christian must regard in his most perfect state. If these duties are neglected, or partially performed, it shews that things are not right with us. And so, of course, we may judge of the influence of grace in our conduct, by the manner in which duty is discharged. Such is the use believers should make of the law,—first to lead them to God through Christ; and then to make it their guide to walk before God in Christ.

I cannot help observing, how much the wisdom of God may be traced in the general harmony of all his works. There is an analogy to be discovered, which reflects light on many subjects, and on this amongst the rest. “Nature, law, and grace, divide
“all the ages of the world. In man, who is a little
“world, there is in every day a resemblance of his
“whole life. The morning is his childhood, the
“noon his youth, the evening his old age. So it is
“in the greater world. The dim break of day was
“the state of nature, and this was the nonage of the
“world, wherein the light of knowlege, both of
“human and divine things, was but weak and ob-
“scure. The sun was risen higher in the state of
“the law, but yet not without thick mists and sha-
“dows; till the high-noon of that true sun of righ-
“teousness, who personally shone forth to the world;
“upon whose vertical point began the age of grace,
“that still continues; which is the clear afternoon,
“and

“and full vigor of the world, though now in its
“sensible declination *.”

If such is the excellency of the law, let men beware
how they neglect it; excuses they may frame to them-
selves, but their mouths will be stopped at the bar of
God, if charged with their transgressions of the di-
vine precepts. Let sinners recollect the danger of
their rebellion against God, and the dreadful con-
sequences of persisting in it. They are *Practical*
Antinomians; and unless the grace of God prevent,
must feel the weight of the divine displeasure for sin.

To them who believe, CHRIST is *precious*, and
will be more so, as he is more known; and to him can
the true believer thus pour out his soul:—

Thou art my star: O let thy beams impart
Light to my eyes, and comfort to my soul.
Direct my course; and let thy gracious arm
Be ever near, my all-sufficient guard.

Then shall I never sink, tho' storms should rise,

And wind and waves in all their fury rage;

But o'er the swelling surge securely ride,

Thy cross my anchor, and thy word my guide;

Till death shall land me on the blissful shore,

Where sins, and fears, and dangers are no more.

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* *Bishop HALL's Works, Vol. III. p. 703.*

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